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A-ONE #0227

07/07/00

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"Saying it like it is!"

What a terrific holiday week, weather-wise! It's been a great week, starting off with a nice weekend, an unfortunate day of work in-between the weekend and 4th of July, and a remaining short week at work. The Fourth was delightful here in Boston. Although I haven't attended the festivities on the Esplanade in many years due to the crowds, I do watch some of the activities on television. Another spectacular show this year. The day started off well with a barbecue at the home of one of my assistants. A great day all around. And now another weekend is upon us!

This summer continues to be a slow period for news. Other than the usual and boring articles pertaining to mergers, ups and downs of the "dot-coms", and "junk" news - it's fairly uneventful lately. I mean you have to know it's a slow news week when one of the prominent "headlines" pertains to the fact that "DotComGuy" hasn't given up his vigil! Things can only go up from there!

On the local and personal front, things are finally getting caught up. The gardens are in and finally doing well. The new lawn is taking shape nicely (no thanks to Joe!). And the pool is finally open, but I haven't taken the inaugural swim yet. I may get to relax this weekend? Nah, that will be the day!

Until next time...

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PEOPLE ARE TALKING
compiled by Joe Mirando
jmirando@portone.com

Hidi ho friends and neighbors. I'm just finishing a week's worth of vacation, and I must say that it was completely unsatisfying. First of all, it included The Fourth of July "long weekend". Just knowing that I would have gotten the day off anyway kind of soured it for me. Second of all, I actually have three weeks worth of vacation, but was asked to only take one week now. I can remember a time when one week off was more than enough for me. Not any more. The modern age of employer/employee relations has come to stay, and I'll take all I can get, thank you very much.

Okay, on to other things. The TEAM ATARI SETI@home search group is quickly approaching 21 years of contributed CPU time with only 38 of us participating. If you're interested, check out the main SETI@home site at <http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu> and the TEAM ATARI site at http://setiathome.ssl.berkeley.edu/cgi-bin/cgi?cmd=team_lookup&name=team+atari.

If there's any chance at all that you could put your PC or Mac to work

in its idle time, sign up and join the team.

Next subject. I found an interesting site while perusing the net the other day. Some of you may have seen this or heard about it already, but there's a web page out there dedicated to the "iTari" game system, a copy of the Atari 2600 in a translucent case a' la iMac. The writing is quite amusing without being offensive, and the pictures of the system look pretty good. I think I'll wait to place my order though.<g> There are also several other fun "products" that you can view by clicking on the "The Aalgar Corporation" link down at the bottom of the page. Take a look and check it out:
<http://www.aalgar.com/aalcorp/062900/>

I did use about two hours of my spare time this week to watch CONTACT with Jodie Foster and Matthew McConaughey again. While the search for extraterrestrial intelligence doesn't quite happen like they showed it in the movie, it DOES tend to fire the imagination. What is actually out there, and will we ever get to see it? I don't know, and I don't know. When we were visiting the moon on a fairly regular basis, I didn't think it would be long until we were setting foot on Mars and learning more about our own planet because of it. But after we got bored with our trips to the moon... and the other participants in the cold war never got there at all... we just stopped. Sure, we've got satellites all over the place and a spiffy space-based telescope that can see farther away, and therefore farther back in time, than ever before, but it's not the same as having a human being there on the spot. NASA, like a good portion of today's society, has gotten into the habit of doing things "virtually". I know it's not fashionable to say so these days, but it just ain't the same. "Cheaper, Faster, Better" isn't always "better".

It kind of reminds me of what happened with Atari. Instead of actually progressing and evolving, they simply lowered the price on what they already had. The original "virtual advancement".

Well, let's get to the UseNet stuff...

From the comp.sys.atari.st NewsGroup
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Marlin Bates asks for help with a Mega STE:

"I just recently re-acquired a Mega STe (I had one eons ago) and have a few questions! (It is like learning a new language!)

The bundle I got was VERY generously supplied with all of my software wants (I should think!) so I have a few hardware questions:

1. Can the graphics on the Mega STe be enhanced in any way? Any expansion boards, etc?
2. Is there any easy way to get an Epson 600 Printer to work with this? It has a parallel port, but I suspect it needs a driver or something similar."

Daniel Dreibelbis tells Marlin:

"There were a number of video boards available for the MegaSTe - it uses the same VME expansion slot as the TT. Two that come to mind are

the ones that were made by Cyrel and the Crazy Dots board, I also recall a Nova card that uses the same slot. Mario Becroft, a young fellow out in New Zealand, is currently working on a new VME video card.

For the printer, I have only one word: NVDI 5. It contains an excellent set of drivers for the Epsoms."

Marlin replies to Daniel:

"Wow. I did not realize so many were available. Now comes the hard part: where does one find these boards?"

Our old friend Hallvard Tangeraas adds:

"I don't know about the other boards: my guess is that they're not made or sold any longer so you have to buy them second-hand (a good place to ask for stuff like this is in this exact group!).

For Mario's board, you can check out his website for more information as well as contact information (not sure though if he has specific information for the graphic board yet):

<http://gem.win.co.nz/mario/hardware/> "

Marlin now asks about sound:

"Newly acquired Mega STe here and I can not seem to get Audio CDs to play correctly. I launch the AudioCD DA and it seems to play (access light and the prog display acts normal) BUT no sound comes out! Also, if I try to move the sound slider box on the app "up" it just pops back to the "0" position."

Mark Bedingfield tells Marlin:

"Plug the speakers into the front of the cdrom, you can make an adaptor using a couple of resistors to mix STE and CD audio."

Marlin replies to Mark:

"Hmm, well, this sounds interesting and I appreciate the answer, but I am still curious as to what the problem is with my system (if any). I mean why am I not able to get the music on the STe, it seems like I should. OR, is that just it, I can not?

There is a button on the accessory that says "record" so I am assuming that music can get in to the STe."

Lyndon Amsdon tells Marlin:

"I have an IDE cd-rom (you probably have SCSI) and AFAIK when you play an audio CD using the controls on the front of the CDRom or software the audio doesn't get transferred over the IDE/SCSI cables, it comes from the audio port.

The STe motherboard hasn't got a socket for audio like PC soundcards. You can either :

(1) Use the headphones connected to the headphone socket on the front of the CDRom.

(2) Use the RCAs on the back of the CDROM connected to a amplifier.
(if you have them)

(3) Make a nice little circuit to send the audio into the STe motherboard. This has the advantage of controlling the Treble, Bass and volume of the CD audio.

Yes, you can record parts of the CD (or all of it!) to the hard drive. Then play it of the hard drive. Watch out as it can eat up a lot of hard drive space! (600mb at top quality!)"

Oh what the heck. Let's turn this into a "Marlin Asks" column. He's asking some good questions... and getting some good answers.

He now turns his gaze to STinG and CAB:

"I will apologize in advance for all of my questions over the next few days, months, years (!)

As some of you might know by now, I have re-acquired a Mega STe. It came with plenty of software and, well, I need the short course in all of this new stuff!

Question one: How do I get on the net with the STe? I seem to have something called STing installed as well as CAB. I know that CAB is a web browser, but how do I get the ST hooked up over a PPP/Slip connection?

Question Two: Can the STe do 57k via modem? Curious about that."

Greg Goodwin tells Marlin:

">Question one: How do I get on the net with the STe

1) Connect a modem to one of the serial ports (the modem port is the most commonly used). I'm not really sure of the MegaSTEs maximum speed. Most ST models top out at 19200, while the Falcon and TT can in theory go to 115K or 230K (for some reason, my Falcon is unreliable above 56K).

2) Make sure you have HSMODEM7 in the auto folder. HSMODEM7 is a suite of programs, with strange names like SCC.PRG. You only need the two or three applicable to your computer.

Unfortunately, I can't remember the exact setup from memory and my Falcon is at home. FWIW, HSMODEM fixes some poor code in TOS relating to modem speeds above 9600.

3) Set up and run STing. This is done by placing STING.PRG and STING.INF in the auto folder (STING.INF is an ASCII file telling the computer where to find the rest of the STING package) and SERIAL.CPX and STING.CPX in the CPX folder. The other two CPXs are not needed. Upon running DIALER.PRG, you will be able to tell STing about your ISP and configure it. (You can also hand edit the ASCII files DEFAULT.CFG and DIAL.SCR, but you do not have to). This can get a bit tricky, so feel free to ask for help.

4) Finally, run CAB. You will need an overlay (CAB.OVL) from Dan Ackerman's web site [is Oliver still updating his?]

Some things to note....

First, get HSMODEM running. It has to be before STing in the

auto folder since it configures the serial port!

Secondly, get STing running. STing has tools (like Ping) that let you get the bugs out. Until STing is running smoothly, there is no point in trying to run an application. Remember, STing actually does the work of communicating over the internet, even if it doesn't do anything with the data other than transport it.

Finally, CAB (or any other STing compatible program) takes the data from STing and displays it. It then gives data back to STing for sending over the net. Worry about this last.

I know this sounds like a mess, but it really isn't that bad provided you take the time to read all the instructions and do one step at a time."

Derryck Croker adds a very good bit of advice:

"Nicholas Bales' FAQ should answer many of your questions, <http://bales.online.fr/atari> "

Matthew Simpson-Morgan asks and oldie but a goodie:

"I've found some clock programs for ST in the .acc format, but I don't know how to run them so they integrate with the programs I use; also, I don't know where to find them once a program is running - ie, on the menu etc. I have a Mega ST4, and it has 2 slots for backup batteries, which I was told keeps the clock time... now, if I can just get a clock to load with my Cubase etc. I recently discovered the auto-folder idea (I only have floppies, no hard drive), but I know .acc files load differently."

Steve Stuppple tells Matthew:

"Programs/files with the .ACC extension are 'Desktop Accessories', they load in on boot-up, or resolution change, and sit their waiting for something to do.

They cover a wide variety of applications:

Fastcopy is a disk copier
Harlekin is a bit of everything

You could call it a crude multi-tasking.

On my machine I have several, including the CPX control panel which is an extension of the accessory idea.

At default, unless you've got a program in your AUTO folder to alter it, the computer look in the ROOT directory of the boot drive, in your case drive A, for any .acc files. It then attempts to load them in, IN the order they are in the directory NOT as you see them when you open the disk.

Every now and again you will come across a couple of acc's that don't like each other and case the machine to bomb out! So if you want to play around with some, bear this in mind. 99% are OK with each other.

If you do keep bombing out on bootup, and it boots fine without acc's,

try eliminating a program 1 by 1, or change the order they load in!

I mentioned that they come in all types of applications, well they also come as novelty items: a cat running after the mouse cursor, eyes following you around, and one called MITES; this doesn't show up in the menu (I think) but you see like pixels, sorry mites, on screen eating the image!!!

> also, I
>don't know where to find them once a program is running - ie, on the
>menu etc.

Some are totally invisible, but MOST are there on the menu bar on the top left, in the same menu that gives you the TOS copyright stuff.

Underneath the info are 6 space for up to 6 .acc programs. There are programs that help you extend that.

>I have a Mega ST4, and it has 2 slots for backup batteries,
>which I was told keeps the clock time....

You can set the time using Atari's Control Panel, yes it's an .ACC program:) If you have a language disk, it should be on it. This allows you to customise some of the Desktop to your liking: Colour, mouse speed, keyboard, printer etc...

There is 2 types of control panel, one you can change your serial port aspects and one you can't, in which case there will be another ACC program on the language disk.

> now, if I can just get a clock
>to load with my Cubase etc.

I don't quite understand the question!!! If you are after a clock, as in clock program that shows you the ACTUAL time, then look for something called clock.acc.

> I recently discovered the auto-folder idea
>(I only have floppies, no hard drive), but I know .acc files load
>differently. Would appreciate some help!

As you are a floppy user, if you've got only one drive. Create yourself a small RAM disk and use it as a second drive, remember to save the data before you switch off.

If you have a 4 meg machine, you can easily create a 2 meg RAM disk, and use it as a hard drive. I use to do this before I got my hands on hard drive.

And yes, these come ACC's as well. The most novel is DC software's RAM-IT! (I hope I've got the right name! I'll be shot otherwise!) This actually treats the RAM disk as a physical disk, giving it track and sectors!!! It's the only one I've seen that does this, great if you want to make up a 720k disk in memory without having to mess around writing to floppy etc."

Tim Conrardy posts this interesting bit of info about 720 Kbyte disks and Windows:

"Recently on the Atari-Midi mailing list there has been a thread going

about reading/writing 720K discs on Win 98. It seemed that some people were having no problems with Win 95, while others were having problems with Win 98. One of our members (Donald Skaggs) performed some experiments and below are his conclusions. Looks like good research.

Nicholas (Bales): If you are reading this, perhaps this should be added to the Atari Faq as this is a recent Bug that has been an issue lately.

Tim's Atari Midi World <http://atari.atlantis-bbs.com>

Mirror Site: <http://sites.netscape.net/timconrardy/index.htm>

Atari-Midi Mailing List: <http://www.egroups.com/group/atari-midi>

Can't read or write 720K disks between the PC and ATARI? Get Blue screen with error messages on the PC and can't read files on the ATARI?

Most likely a program is interfering with this function in Windows or the disk is not formatted for DOS on TOS 1.0/1.02. as long names on Windows are unreadable on the ATARI.

How do you know if you have TOS 1.0/1.02? Hit CNTRL/ALT/DEL together and let go. Does the ATARI reboot? NO? Well then you have TOS 1.0/1.02. These early TOS versions do not format for DOS on their own but it can be done with a program called Maxifile--and others.

Now that you have a DOS formatted 720K disk you find Windows gets a ton of errors when you try to read or write from the 720K disk. Now what?

You have two options:

1) Since the problem is MOST LIKELY NOT in Windows itself start uninstalling programs on the W9X machine until the bug goes away. Then get a version of the problem program that does not interfere with the 720K disk read/write operation. You can only experiment with that to see.

2) Start from scratch. Reformat your drive. Reload W9X and try Read/Write functions to 720K disks after each program install. Windows on it's own will most likely handle 720 ATARI/PC DOS disks fine. However there are programs that clobber that operation in W9X.----EZCD CREATOR DELUXE from Adaptec for one. Earlier versions worked fine with no interference with the 720K DOS disk read/write operation.

Now that you have figured out what Windows program is clobbering your ATARI/PC 720K DOS disk operation then you find that that MIDI file (or other) copied to the DOS disk will not read on the ATARI. What's the deal with this?

Long names (any file name greater than wxyzwxyz.xyz i.e eight characters in the prefix and three characters in the suffix) are unrecognised on the ATARI (at least on the early versions of TOS and probably later versions). Even if you rewrite the name of the PC file to the eight character ATARI prefix limit on either the PC or ATARI the PC has written garbage to the disk and the file will be unreadable on the ATARI. Bummer.

You can always read/write 720K ATARI/PC DOS disks in Windows SAFE MODE (F8 during W9X bootup)."

Lyndon Amsdon tells Tim:

"That's quite interesting. I've just bought an old 386 laptop and have been playing around with it. I download programs etc from Atari with the internet connection then take it to PC using floppy disks.

One file was 760 something kilobytes so I formatted the disk on the ST to 82 tracks and 10 sectors. TOS works fine with this format (usually!) but Windows 3.1 came up with "disk is not formatted".

I found exiting Windows then using DOS was a lot more stable and didn't care too much about type of format. You'll have to learn those good old DOS commands again but it works for me!"

Edward Baiz asks a good question about digital cameras:

"I was just wondering and would like an opinion. Which is the best kind or digital camera, the one that puts the pictures on a 3.5 inch disk or else the ones that have a cable and need to be hooked up to the computer so that images can be transferred?"

I'll save my opinion until last and see if anyone else comes up with the same reasoning. In the meantime, Steve Hammond tells Edward:

"The best are the ones that use memory cards. These can hold in excess of 64 mb (depending on type). Keep in mind that for a file that will produce a decent 4x6 or 5x7 inch print you are going to need about a 3 to 4 mb uncompressed image file (tif). Cameras that use a floppy are normally only 640x480 resolution, useful for 72 dpi screen resolution only. If they do produce a higher resolution you are not going to get very many images on a 3.5 floppy even when saved as jpegs (and data transfer to the floppy is much slower than to the memory cards)."

Simon Osborne adds:

"Get a camera that can connect to a computer via Serial port, as I think the Atari programs only support that method of transport."

Daniel Dreibelbis adds this interesting tidbit:

"Actually, since he has a Hades, there's another option that he has open to him - SCSI. According to Dave Barkin, Microtek makes a PCMCIA card reader device that hooks up via SCSI, and low and behold, an Atari equipped with SCSI and HD Driver installed will recognize that device and allow both reading AND writing to the card. Which means that it opens up the number of cameras he can use.

I'm actually quite excited about digital cameras, and I'm now noticing that the prices have been dropping very rapidly as of late - my local Business Depot has new Kodak and HP cameras staring at \$450 CDN .

Now I think one of the essential bits of kit that'll be needed for the Milan II will be digital camera drivers...."

Ken Springer puts his thoughts into the mix:

"I don't know about picture quality, but if all I had was Atari computers, I'd get the one that uses the disks for a couple of reasons. 1) They save in a standard format, such as TIFF or JPG, which means you can pop them in any computer anywhere anytime. None of the memory saving cameras can dump to the Atari platform AFAIK. There used to be a (French?) company that made a cable for connecting some of the early CASIO models, but I believe they are no longer around. 2) As long as you take extra floppies, you can take pictures until the batteries are dead. <G>

It seems most cameras have different resolutions you can choose from, so the number of pictures you can take depend on the chosen resolution and memory/# of floppies. As the resolution abilities of the camera get better, the floppy versions will be limited by the storage ability of the floppy.

Sony is the only floppy camera(s) that I know of, and they tend to be higher priced, too. There's more stuff to them because of the floppy business. Now that I've also got a Windows machine in addition to my Atari's, I don't know which type I'd get."

Well, John Garone pegged my opinions, almost to the letter:

"I've opted for the Sony direct to disk only because I wasn't sure of the compatibility with PCM cards or direct connections to my Falcon! (not much help for you there!). The memory cards should be faster copying in the camera, hold more pics and there are floppy memory card adapters for interface. But the direct to disk is stable and you'll have that floppy as back-up if not erased (usable till the floppy dies!)."

Well folks, that's it for this week. Tune in the next time around, same time, same station, and be ready to listen to what they are saying when...

PEOPLE ARE TALKING

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->A-ONE's Game Console Industry News - The Latest Gaming News!
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## Sony Refiles Patent Claims Against Connectix

Connectix' declaration of victory in a recent patent dispute with Sony may be premature. Connectix announced on Thursday that Sony had filed a voluntary dismissal of a patent case involving Connectix' Virtual Game Station (VGS), a program that allows Mac users to play many games designed for Sony's PlayStation game console. However, Sony refiled the suit on Friday, telling Cnet that it was following the judge's advice to avoid "procedural issues that may have been appealable."

Sony filed the case in February, charging that VGS infringed on 11 PlayStation patents.

A San Francisco court in May dismissed seven of Sony's nine claims in a separate lawsuit alleging that VGS violated its copyrights and trade secrets (see "Court dismisses most Sony claims against Connectix"). A hearing on the two remaining claims is scheduled for Sept. 1. Sony told Cnet that a hearing on the new patent claims has not been set.

"While we recognize that Sony may still attempt to bring some of these claims back before the court at a later date, this represents the third victory in a row for Connectix in this case," said Connectix CEO Roy McDonald in a prepared statement on Thursday, before Sony refiled the case. "We hope that at some point Sony will recognize the merits of cooperating with us in giving added flexibility to consumers and fans of the PlayStation. It is time for them to withdraw entirely from their course of filing baseless litigation that the courts must dismiss."

#### Sony-Connectix Bout Moves to Next Round

A week after withdrawing, then refileing, a patent-infringement suit over Connectix's PlayStation emulator, Sony predicted the case will come to trial this fall.

After last week's withdrawal and refileing of a patent-infringement suit, the multifaceted legal conflict between Sony Computer Entertainment America Inc. and Connectix Corp. seems to be back on track, and Sony told ZDNet News it expects the dispute to come to trial this fall.

Last Thursday, Sony's lawyers pulled one of two outstanding lawsuits it had begun against Connectix in San Francisco Federal District Court, both centered on Connectix's Virtual Game Station, a software package that allows Apple Macintosh computers and Windows systems to run games designed for Sony's PlayStation game console.

The patent-infringement case was withdrawn one day before Judge Charles Legge was to decide on Connectix's motion to dismiss, but Foster City, Calif.-based Sony refiled a revised version, containing six of the original's eleven charges, that evening.

As a result of the refileing, the case was reassigned initially to a magistrate court in Oakland, Calif.; Sony is requesting that it be returned to Judge Legge's bench. If this request is granted, then the next step would be for Judge Legge to set a schedule for hearing evidence.

But first he may have to decide on a renewed motion to dismiss. "It's likely we'll file another motion," Roy McDonald, president and CEO of San Mateo, Calif.-based Connectix. "It could happen in weeks," he added.

However, James Gilliland, a partner at San Francisco's Townsend & Townsend & Crew and a lawyer for Sony said, "We're assuming the case is going to trial in the fall."

This suit joins an ongoing intellectual-property suit Sony filed against Connectix in January 1999, only weeks after VGS first shipped for the Mac. This case is scheduled for a September hearing in which Judge Legge will decide whether or not it will go to a jury.

That suit differs from the patent-infringement case in that it covers alleged issues of copyright infringement, trademark dilution and misappropriation of trade secrets. However, it also hinges on Sony's contention that the Virtual Game Station software offered insufficient protection against running pirated versions of PlayStation games, especially compared with the anti-piracy measures Sony claims are built into the game console's hardware.

"Sony is doubtful that any software could provide adequate piracy protection," Gilliland said.

Game piracy is of particular concern to Sony, since the company receives revenue from the sale of both Sony-branded games and through licensing of third-party developers.

In February 1999, Sony sought a temporary restraining order on shipments of VGS but Judge Legge rejected the company's request. However, in April 1999, Legge did issue a preliminary injunction against Connectix that was based on the issues of copyright infringement and trademark dilution, but not the issue of trade secrets.

As a result, Connectix suspended shipments of VGS, although copies of the product already in the channel remained available for sale.

Almost a year later, in February 2000, the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals issued a "reverse and remand" order against the lower court's preliminary injunction.

The appeals court said Connectix's development of VGS, which involved looking at but not copying (in a process called "reverse engineering") PlayStation code, was protected under the "fair use" principle and therefore not a violation of Sony's rights. Connectix resumed shipping the product along with updates.

According to the court's decision, "Intermediate copies made and used by Connectix during the course of its reverse engineering of the Sony BIOS were protected fair use, necessary to permit Connectix to make its non-infringing Virtual Game Station function with PlayStation games."

In the face of that decision, Sony filed a second suit against Connectix the next week, claiming that VGS represented 11 patent infringements. After last week's refiling, it remains in a preliminary state.

In May, Judge Legge disallowed seven of the nine copyright-infringement, trademark-dilution and trade-secret complaints in the original suit. He stated in his motion that, based on the February findings of the Ninth Circuit Court, Sony would lose on the trademark and copyright claims. As a result, the case was whittled down to the issues of misappropriation of trade secrets and unfair competition on the part of Connectix.

On June 30, Sony presented to Judge Legge the evidence it plans to present at the trial of this case, should it proceed to that phase.

Current scheduling calls for Connectix to respond by August 15. On Sept. 1, Judge Legge will hold a hearing to determine whether or not the trade-secrets claim will go to a jury.

Also on June 30, Sony petitioned the U.S. Supreme Court to review the Ninth Circuit Court's decision on copyright, hoping to reinstate the claims the Circuit Court dismissed.

"Chances are always small that the Supreme Court will address any case, but this one addresses very important issues in software copyright law, so we're hopeful they will," Sony attorney Gilliland said.

#### Lara Croft Creator Wooed by Infogrames

Troubled British computer games company Eidos Plc., creator of computer heroine Lara Croft, is being wooed by French software group Infogrames Entertainment, industry sources said Tuesday.

The sources said the companies were in talks for an all-share transaction that could result in Infogrames offering equivalent of 700 pence for each Eidos share.

At this price Eidos would be valued at 720 million pounds (\$1.09 billion) or 3.7 times its 1999 sales.

Eidos has been scouting for a suitable suitor after sharp falls in its shares recently following two quick profit warnings in recent months, reflecting problems in adapting its software to the next generation of gaming platforms.

Talks are, however, at a delicate stage and much depends on how the French management is able to deal with bringing on board the creative people at Eidos.

However, if it succeeds it would create a \$2.0 billion company and major force in Europe's burgeoning electronic entertainment industry, which is expected to witness a fast growth in the next few years on the back of growing popularity of the Internet.

The sources said Infogrames, which has been talking to Eidos for the last 2-1/2 weeks, could well take another three weeks before it can formally announce a deal.

Eidos shares closed sharply higher, touching an intra-day high of 570 pence before closing at 534 pence, around nine percent above its previous closing price.

The price is, however, a far cry from its over 12.70 pounds last December, when it was riding the crest of popularity for software-based games.

The prospect of issuing fresh paper took its toll on Infogrames shares in Paris, which at one stage fell seven percent before closing around three percent lower at 24.50 euros.

While analysts said Infogrames would benefit from Eidos' sport licenses, strong franchise in Lara Croft and a strong sales force in the UK, some were surprised with the price at which it was being negotiated.

"The premium is a bit high and Infogrames has never overpaid in the past," one analyst said.

Antonin Baudry, analyst at ETC in Paris, said there were worries that Eidos would dilute its earnings.

"Infogrames is already busy dealing with its loss-making GT Interactive unit in the United States and if you add Eidos, this puts a lot on its plate. The Eidos news will penalize Infogrames's stock price in the short term," he said.

Some observers also said that Infogrames has unnecessarily delayed a deal with Eidos and could have easily bought it cheaper two months ago, when it was trading at little over three pounds.

The company's shares have underperformed the FTSE All Share Index by around 53 percent as Monday when it closed at 487 pence.

Eidos is understood to have attracted attention for other firms as well but Infogrames was found to be a more appropriate fit than others.

Analysts have speculated that software giant Microsoft and Electronic Arts Inc in the United States could have been interested in Eidos. The company is currently developing 10 of Sony Corp's PlayStation 2 titles and is working closely with Microsoft and Nintendo Co. Ltd. to support their new consoles to be released in late 2001.

It has also secured worldwide publishing rights to Sony's PlayStation and PC versions of the animated feature film "Chicken Run," due out this summer.

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A-ONE's Headline News
The Latest in Computer Technology News
Compiled by: Dana P. Jacobson

Microsoft Limits Temporary Workers

Saturday will mark the end of an era at Microsoft, when a new policy goes into effect that restricts the company's extensive use of temporary workers.

Besieged by lawsuits and complaints, Microsoft is limiting the length of temporary workers' contracts to 365 days, and will further require that workers must take 100 days off between assignments.

The policy was announced in February, giving temps time to find new jobs. More than a third of Microsoft's new hires in the past three years have

been former temporary workers, according to company spokesman Dan Leach.

For others, however, the new policy may mean forcing them to leave jobs for no reason other than the passage of a year's time.

"For those temps who didn't get full-time jobs, they're now out of a job for 100 days," said Marcus Courtney, co-founder of WashTech, a pro-union organization funded by the Communications Workers of America. "They've done their jobs well, and many of these positions are truly permanent. Microsoft is just choosing to staff those jobs with temps."

Courtney contends that temporary workers deserve the same benefits as full-time Microsoft workers. He notes that Microsoft approves the final hiring of each worker, and is more directly involved with performance and other issues than the temporary service agencies, which actually sign the workers' checks.

WashTemp has about 250 members, a level that's remained steady since the group's inception in 1998. He said workers are afraid of retribution from Microsoft and other companies, though he said he knew of no workers who were disciplined for speaking out on labor issues.

Temp workers themselves have mixed feelings. Many agree that temp workers at Microsoft are treated differently. Benefits come from the temp agency - the legal employer of the workers - and often fail to match Microsoft's generous benefits package for full-time employees.

Temporary workers often make as much as the permanent workers and sometimes more, said another former temp who would only speak on condition of anonymity. She said she made as much as \$80,000 in less than a year.

"It's a cash cow," said the ex-temp, who worked in Microsoft's online divisions and is now a full-time worker at another area technology company. "I definitely got paid well, but when I left, I took a job for substantially less money so I could feel more like I belonged on a team."

Of the 19,000 Microsoft employees in the Puget Sound area, anywhere from 5,000 to 6,000 are temporary workers, Leach said. Those hiring levels won't change, he added.

"We've made this change in response to criticism about all this," Leach said. "I don't believe there's any kind of second-class citizenship here, but there are legitimate business reasons to differentiate between the two."

Microsoft is currently battling a class-action suit brought by temporary workers who are seeking stock option benefits extended to full-time workers in similar positions.

AOL/Netscape Hit With Privacy Lawsuit

The suit alleges that Netscape's SmartDownload feature illegally monitors downloads of .exe and .zip files.

New York class action attorneys are accusing America Online Inc.'s (NYSE:AOL - news) Netscape subsidiary of eavesdropping on consumers who download software through its network.

The law firm of Abbey, Gardy & Squitieri has sued AOL in federal court in New York, claiming that Netscape Communications Inc.'s SmartDownload software illegally monitors downloads of .exe and .zip files.

SmartDownload is a program that's usually installed by people downloading the Netscape browser. After installation, the service is automatically activated whenever a user downloads files from the Web. AOL acquired the software when it bought Netscape in November 1998.

The suit seeks class action status and was filed on behalf of Christopher Specht, who runs several Web sites where people can download files.

The suit claims that SmartDownload captures and transmits back to Netscape uniquely identifiable information when a person visits a Web site and downloads software.

"Unbeknownst to the members of the Class, and without their authorization, defendants have been spying on their Internet activities," the suit says.

That action, the suit claims, permits Netscape to create a profile of a customer's downloads.

AOL was not immediately available for comment.

The privacy violation claims could have ramifications for other disputes over who has the right to see what information people have downloaded. For example, the music industry has been eager to get the names and numbers of people it claims have illegally downloaded copyrighted music.

AOL is currently the target of several class action suits. A Florida judge recently approved class action status in a suit accusing AOL of illegally charging hourly subscribers who were forced to view pop-up ads. AOL said it plans to appeal.

A separate suit, filed in federal court in Tampa, alleges that the company failed to notify some customers that their calls were long distance and did not provide local-access numbers.

Hacker Risked Astronauts' Lives

A computer hacker put space shuttle astronauts' lives at risk by overloading NASA's communication system in 1997, the agency told the BBC in a program to be aired Monday.

The hacker interfered with computer systems monitoring the heartbeat, pulse and medical conditions of the space shuttle crew as it docked with the Russian Mir space station, NASA inspector general Roberta Gross told the BBC program Panorama.

"We had an activity at a NASA center where a hacker was overloading our systems ... to such an extent that it interfered with communications between the NASA center, some medical communications and the astronauts aboard the shuttle," Gross said.

Although NASA had backup communication systems, the incident "shows the potential that hackers have for doing some real damage to NASA's mission

and astronaut safety," she said.

Panorama interviewed Gross for an investigation into how Internet and computer systems have become the vulnerable spots in the defenses of Western nations.

Interpol Needs Help On Net Crimes

Acknowledging international law enforcement's inability thus far to combat fast-moving Internet crime, Interpol is considering letting a Silicon Valley security company help it protect businesses from malicious hackers.

If the partnership is reached, it would be the first time the international police agency has paired with a private company to fight Net crime, Interpol secretary general Raymond Kendall told AP.

The company, AtomicTangerine of Menlo Park, Calif., has approached Kendall with an idea to create an "early warning system" that would help private sector businesses protect themselves from cyberattacks, he said. In turn, information gathered by private companies could be made available to Interpol, says AtomicTangerine, a consultancy that spun off from SRI International, formerly the Stanford Research Institute.

IE's Lead Over Netscape Lengthens With New Version

Microsoft this week has quietly made available for download the final domestic version of its Internet Explorer 5.5 browser and has released international versions as well.

Although the domestic release is not yet official, Microsoft posted the point upgrade to its browser on its Windows Update site. It also released Chinese, German, Japanese and Korean versions of the browser.

The browser has been available in "beta," or test, form since December, and the final version was released to software download and review sites including CNET Networks, parent company of News.com, last week.

Features new to IE 5.5 include improvements in the speed and reliability of printing and a way to preview print jobs, Microsoft said at the time of its beta release. The company was not available for comment this morning.

Under the hood, the browser has increased support for World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) standards, including Cascading Style Sheets 1 (CSS) and Synchronized Multimedia Integration Language (SMIL), as well as support for a Microsoft presentation technology known as Dynamic HTML (DHTML).

The upcoming version of Microsoft's consumer operating system, code-named Millennium, includes IE 5.5. That product, also released to the review press last week, is set for general release Sept. 14.

Microsoft is readying the final version of IE 5.5 as Netscape Communications tests version 6.0 of its competing browser. That numbering, however, may be confusing; Netscape's new browser, rebuilt from the ground up, has been in development so long that the company skipped the "5.0"

designation altogether.

Formerly known as "Communicator," Netscape 6.0 is scheduled for a second beta release in late August and a final "gold master" version in the late fall, AOL said today. AOL acquired Netscape in March of last year. AOL scotched the name "Communicator" for browser versions 6.0 and above, citing greater consumer recognition of the name "Netscape."

With the new browser, Netscape catches up to Microsoft in some crucial respects. Like second-rung browser maker Opera Software, Netscape redesigned the version from scratch to provide a browser separable into discrete components, or modules. Microsoft's browser has long had that modular structure.

W3C standards form another area of technological competition. Both Netscape, and most recently, Microsoft have come under fire from independent advocacy groups for not hewing closely enough to W3C recommendations. As a result of lax adherence to standards, Web authors have had to spend time testing--and in many cases rewriting--Web pages for the various browsers.

Netscape, however, has won plaudits from those same advocates for its standards compliance with the underlying browser engine of its 6.0 release.

On the marketing front, Microsoft has been running away with the browser sector, continuing a trend that was partly responsible for the antitrust trial that threatens to bring the software maker under the government's anti-monopoly knife.

A recent study found that 86 percent of Web surfers worldwide use IE. The glacial pace of Netscape's development, which has faced repeated delays, only aided Microsoft's rise.

Microsoft Hacks IE 5.5 for Mac

When Microsoft representatives tossed T-shirts to the crowd at the recent MacHack 2000 conference, some attendees threw them back. But no one appeared to return the MacHack CD, which includes the first beta version of Internet Explorer 5.5.

New features in the beta--which Microsoft described as a "technology preview" that's "not reflective of the final product"--include extensible toolbars to which you can drag graphics from a Web page. The graphics - GIF, JPEG and PNG files--become buttons that can link to the image's URL or execute a JavaScript. Animated GIFs dragged to the bar continue to animate. By modifying the XML code that configures the toolbar, you can add your own URLs or define four states for each button: enabled, disabled, rollover and depressed.

Another new feature gives you more flexibility when opening links in new windows. IE 5.0 lets you open a new window in front of the current one by command-clicking on a link. IE 5.5 adds the ability to open a new window that appears behind the current one by command-shift-clicking on the link.

A new Type-select navigation feature lets you use the keyboard to move among links on a Web page. As you begin typing, the browser places a focus

ring around the text or graphic link that most closely matches your keystrokes. When you press Return, the browser goes to the selected link.

The beta also includes a revamped version of the Tasman rendering engine, which was introduced in IE 5. Microsoft said the new version offers "significant improvements" in performance, stability and standards-compliance when rendering CSS 1, CSS2, HTML 4, JavaScript and XML pages.

Unlike most of the hacks presented at the conference, IE 5.5 beta 1 does not include source code.

The company said that the beta preview is not Carbon compliant. Microsoft has developed a Carbonized version of IE 5.0 that was included on the Mac OS X Developer Preview 4 CD distributed to attendees at Apple's Worldwide Developers Conference in May (see "A bridge made of Carbon").

The MacHack CD, which includes 85 hacks as well as papers from the conference, is available for \$19.95 (plus shipping) through the Mindvision online store. You can also purchase the MacHack 1999 CD, now dubbed the MacHack Historical CD, for the same price, or buy both for \$34.95.

Intel Shelves 800-MHz Xeon Chip

Intel has canceled plans for high-end versions of its 800-MHz Xeon processor, saying computer makers didn't want the chip.

The Xeon is Intel's high-end version of its Pentium III. The most expensive Xeons come with 1MB or 2MB of high-speed cache memory built into the chip itself.

Intel released 700-MHz versions of these large-cache Xeons in May but decided to skip the 800-MHz version, company spokesman Otto Pijpker said today.

Intel customers such as Compaq Computer "asked us to reduce the pace of large-cache processor introductions," Pijpker said. The move had nothing to do with Intel's ability to make the chips, he said.

Compaq spokesman Steve Thieme concurred.

"Our customers are looking for less frequent updates with larger incremental gains," he said. "We certainly relay our customer requirements to Intel."

Indeed, computer makers have a lot of work to do to keep up with Intel's upcoming high-end chip launches for server computers, said Insight 64 analyst Nathan Brookwood.

The Itanium chip, the first in a new family of higher-powered 64-bit chips from Intel, will launch in the next few months at speed of 800 MHz, with Level 3 cache of 2MB and 4MB, Pijpker said.

Foster, a new update to the existing 32-bit chip line and successor to Xeon, will debut in the first quarter of 2001 at speeds greater than 1 GHz, Pijpker added.

But even without those new lines, just keeping up with the existing Cascades line of current Pentium III and Xeon chips is difficult, Brookwood said.

"Every time Intel comes out with a new speed bump in the current Cascades line, these guys have to stop and qualify not only uniprocessor models, but dual-processor, four-way, eight-way...None of those qualifications is easy work."

In an effort to adjust to the different demands of higher-end marketplace, Intel has been trying to ease back on how fast new chips come out.

"For a while we tried really hard to keep up with the desktop space. But the customer feedback was that, in general, they weren't going to introduce servers at the same rate they introduce new PCs," Pijpker said.

AllAdvantage Nixes Pending IPO

AllAdvantage, an incentive-to-surf start-up, has pulled the plug on its plans to go public.

The Hayward, Calif.-based company filed a request for withdrawal of its S-1 filing with the Securities and Exchange Commission on Friday, citing adverse market conditions.

The 15-month-old company, which pays members to surf the Web in exchange for viewing ads, filed to sell 15 million shares to the public for between \$8 and \$10 in early February, according to its S-1 filing. But since that time, the market for dot-coms has taken a beating.

Public companies that target advertising to Net users haven't escaped the market's malcontent. Shares of ad networks such as DoubleClick and Engage have fallen 70 percent to 80 percent from their all-time highs. That doesn't bode well for AllAdvantage, which doesn't have a clear-cut path to profitability.

"We incurred net losses of \$37.1 million from inception, March 24, 1999, through December 31, 1999 and \$65.6 million for the three months ended March 31, 2000. We expect to continue to incur operating losses for the foreseeable future," stated an amended filing from June 2.

"Our revenues may never exceed our expenses, and we may never achieve profitability," the filing stated.

AllAdvantage's business model has been called into question because its member costs have exceeded its revenues. According to a filing in early June, the company paid \$32.7 million to members from December to March, but made only \$9.1 million for the same period.

To control the exorbitant costs associated with its business, in June AllAdvantage slashed the number of hours it will pay members to surf, causing some members to scoff. About 7 million people worldwide are registered with AllAdvantage, and about 2 million actually use the program, according to a company spokesman.

AOL Enhances Its E-Mail to Protect Users From Scams

America Online, concerned about Internet ``scams," has begun to identify genuine e-mail from the Internet service provider with added graphics or color to help its 23 million users easily identify e-mail that is truly being sent by AOL.

The Internet services giant began the feature, which is designed to help its subscribers avoid ``being spoofed or caught in fraudulent activity," last week. Official AOL mail includes communications from AOL Chairman Steve Case, welcome letters and any e-mail from screen names ``AOLYouveGotPics" and ``AOL Official Mail."

``The most important thing driving Official Mail is to help our members distinguish mail sent from AOL from (mail sent) by those looking to scam our members," said Tricia Primrose, AOL spokeswoman, adding that the company has seen scams that ask users for credit card information or passwords under the guise of being AOL.

E-mails sent by AOL will be identified with a blue icon in the new mail listbox, a blue border around the mail or an official AOL seal in the lower left-hand corner of the mail form.

The feature is not in response to any recent hacker attacks, Primrose said, adding that it has been in development for a while. Last month, AOL said vandals had broken into its service and gained access to an undisclosed number of member accounts.

Analysts said larger Internet service providers have more need for this type of protection than smaller players, whose e-mail correspondences do not leave their network.

``It isn't a necessary assurance of security in and of itself," said Frank Prince, an analyst at Forrester Research. "Once (users) are geared to an idea that this color scheme means it is safe, if someone can replicate it, they have made it worse. That is the risk of these sorts of iconic solutions."

However, he added that public sentiment is clearly demanding that ISPs of all sizes and shapes do their best to protect users from Internet exploitation.

DotComGuy Still Won't Leave House

DotComGuy has passed the halfway mark without losing it.

The 26-year-old computer systems manager, who legally changed his name to reflect his online life, rented a Dallas town house six months ago and volunteered to live off e-commerce for a year, never to venture past his tiny backyard.

Since Jan. 1, he's bought his necessities and luxuries exclusively online.

DotComGuy's home is a far cry from the empty, two-story domicile he strode into with nothing but a laptop computer and an Internet connection. Now, by

any yuppie yardstick, his ducks are clearly in a row - the ``Dotcompound" has a workout room, postmodern furniture, pets and gourmet food.

The effort has corporate sponsorship from online interests that hope DotComGuy's life - and its dependence on the Internet - will encourage others to use cyberspace for transactions normally reserved for the storefront.

Similar experiments have been undertaken before - the TV program ``Good Morning America" housed two New Yorkers in an ``e-cave" for a week last year with a refrigerator, a \$500 daily stipend, and Web access - but DotComGuy has vowed to live off the Internet longer than anyone else so far.

Two dozen cameras provide video of DotComGuy's almost every move. His only sanctuary from the cameras is a bathroom. The entire operation is run from an adjoining town home, where a bank of computers run by the DotComGuy team arrange the broadcast on the Internet at www.dotcomguy.com.

DotComGuy spends a good part of his day doing mundane things, and one can't help but notice the self-consciousness of someone under constant surveillance. Even the dog - DotComDog - seems excruciatingly self-aware. DotComGuy has developed a peculiar habit: announcing thoughts that would normally be internalized by others.

``I've gotten better at it, though I'm not as good as I probably should be," says the former Mitch Maddox. ``I need to do it more often so people know what's going on - I've invited them into my home and I need to at least be a courteous host and tell them what's going through my mind."

DotComGuy prepares meals with food delivered by online grocers. He says he doesn't miss stepping out into the world to shop for food.

``With groceries, people say 'well, you're isolating yourself, you're not interacting with people.' Truly, the last time you went to the grocery store, was your interaction with people of any quality?" he asks. ``You were in a hurry, you didn't want to talk to anybody, you didn't want to wait in line, and you were probably in an express line."

So far, the location of DotComGuy's house has been kept secret, mainly for his security, spokeswoman Stephanie Germeraad says.

Patrick Keane, a senior analyst at Jupiter Communications, a New York-based research firm that studies Internet commerce, says the whole concept of DotComGuy seems like ``Internet 1997" to him. ``The novelty is gone, the shock value nonexistent," he said. ``If I'm an advertiser, there are a lot better places to place my branding message."

But the site, which has banner ads from companies like United Parcel Service, has more than 11/2 million hits a day, Germeraad said, though that number is lower than when the site first started. It seems a core group of users log on to see what DotComGuy is up to a regular basis and the average time per session is 27 minutes.

If anything, the DotComGuy experiment sheds more light on the life of a homebound bachelor.

``We know his habits pretty well, his demeanor, his personality,"

Germeraad said. ``But he fools us every now and then. Sometimes we'll think we know what he's going to say or do, and he totally comes at us from left field."

Such interest of others' lives is really nothing new, according to social psychology professor Frank T. McAndrew at Knox College in Galesburg, Ill.

``All these things, like MTV's ``Real World" and the new ``Survivor" program, show how he have sort of an innate interest in the goings on of other people's personal lives," McAndrew said. ``It's so we've evolved to know that other people are monitoring us all the time - for any little faux pas."

DotComGuy says his most embarrassing moment has been a tripping on the stairs and sitting on a chair that broke. He shrugs them off as one-time occurrences.

Now it's dinnertime.

``What's today's date?" he asks as he dates a check for a pizza he just ordered online, going between the computer mouse and the checkbook. ``I don't keep track of the days," he says, shifting in his chair.

``I don't concern myself with it because, if I did, then I'd go nuts!"

Americans Rule the Web - For Now

Say "hello" to a World Wide Web that is truly that. From content to culture, the Internet - born of American government need - is rapidly losing its U.S. flavor as more computer users connect from abroad.

Some U.S.-based search directories now accommodate speakers of languages such as French and Chinese. Sports sites highlight soccer rather than baseball. A few American e-commerce services, such as Amazon.com, accept payment by EuroCard.

These changes come as the U.S. cedes more control over Internet addresses and other policies. The California-based Internet Corporation for Assigned Names and Numbers will elect officers by continent this fall, as one way to limit the influence of U.S. representatives.

Teens Design Future of Websites

One of the "webmasters" of the future is an 18-year-old from California with a knack for losing things. That's why Ara Anjargolian created Secondsaver (www.secondsaver.com), an online calendar for people who can't seem to remember where they're supposed to be, when they're supposed to be there - or even where they put their calendar.

The Glendale, Calif., youth's Web site took first place in the annual ArsDigita Foundation contest for teen programmers, winning him \$10,000.

"Someday, even your refrigerator is going to be connected to your computer, and will let you know when you're out of milk," he said. "I want to be a

part of that."

Anjargolian was one of 11 teen finalists from around the world honored by ArsDigita for creating and maintaining useful, unique, nonprofit sites. Eight finalists each won \$1,000. Two who led teams won the grand prize for group efforts, taking home \$5,000 each.

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